

Intelligence Report

DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force

1 June 1995



Prospects for the Eastern Enclaves Following a UN Retrenchment

The Bosnian Serbs have long sought the elimination of the three Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia--Zepa, Srebrenica, and Gorazde, with a total population of some 120,000--because they represent a threat to ultimate Serb control in the area, are viewed as bases for Muslim guerrilla operations, and are perceived as a potential threat to foster unrest in Muslim-populated areas in Serbia.

- The Bosnian Serbs will respond to a UN withdrawal by stepping up military pressure on Bosnian Government forces in the region. They may not move immediately to eliminate the enclaves, however, depending on the military situation elsewhere, NATO threats to use airpower, and the time of year when the UN pulls out.
- Over time--probably within six months to a year after a UN pullout--the Bosnian Serbs almost certainly would move to take the enclaves. They will have to shift substantial forces, however, from other fronts to overwhelm the defenders. If the Serbs transfer these forces, we believe they could capture the enclaves, of which Srebrenica is the most vulnerable.
- A successful Bosnian Serb offensive would prompt most of the 120,000 inhabitants of the enclaves--the majority of whom have already been displaced--to flee the area. The Serbs would seek to drive them into central Bosnia where they could overwhelm relief operations in Tuzla or Sarajevo. Any winter offensive would lead to substantial casualties amongst the civil population because of exposure.

Serbs Want the Enclaves

The Bosnian Serb leadership has long sought to eliminate the Muslim-held region in eastern Bosnia. In the winter of 1992-1993, the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) launched a major offensive that came close to capturing Srebrenica and Zepa, but was stopped by international pressure and the deployment of UN peacekeepers. In the spring of 1994, the BSA attacked Gorazde, eventually capturing about half of the enclave, but provoking NATO airstrikes. In discussions over an eventual territorial settlement to the Bosnian conflict, the Serbs frequently have offered to trade Serb-held areas of Sarajevo for the eastern enclaves.

~~Secret~~

- The Bosnian Serbs believe the eastern enclaves pose a threat to their control of the region. As long as the enclaves are in existence, the Bosnian Government will demand that any peace agreement ensures access to the area. This access would split Serb north-south access in the region.
- The enclaves, although theoretically demilitarized as part of the 1993 UN-brokered agreement that ended the Serb offensive, have become staging areas for Bosnian Government guerrilla bands that raid into Serb-held territory. The Serbs have been unable to stop these bands, which have taken a toll on Serb forces, impeded Serb supplies, and threatened BSA positions from the rear.
- Elimination of the eastern enclaves--particularly Gorazde--would free up some 7,000 Bosnian Serb troops currently tied down in the region.
- The Bosnian Serbs have occasionally argued that the continued presence of Bosnian Muslims in the eastern enclaves is part of a long-term government plan to establish ties to Muslims in the Sandzak region of Serbia along the Serbian-Montenegrin border. [redacted]

Serbs Face Some Constraints

The Bosnian Serbs already have begun stepping up military pressure on the eastern enclaves, launching a ground attack attempting to capture key high ground near Gorazde, pressing the frontlines at Srebrenica, and seizing UN peacekeepers. UNPROFOR Bosnia-Commander Smith believes the Serbs are embarking on a campaign to capture the enclaves. The Serbs have traditionally used their control of all access routes to limit supplies going to UN peacekeepers and civilians in the region. If the UN pulls out of the enclaves, the Bosnian Serbs will further increase their military pressure on the enclaves as a means of driving the civilian population out, as well as to gain leverage on the Bosnian Government. (In 1994, the Bosnian Government backed off from calling for the lifting of the arms embargo because of concerns that such a move would lead to a Serb drive on the enclaves, according to multiple sources.) The Serbs may not move immediately, however, to capture the enclaves.

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force.
Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Norm Schindler, Chief, DCI
Interagency Balkan Task Force, [redacted]

~~Secret~~

- Bosnian Serb forces are stretched thin defending the long confrontation line with the Bosnian Government. If the Serbs decide to capture the enclaves, they will need to reinforce their units in the area substantially, especially with artillery and armor forces. This would be difficult because Bosnian Government forces continue to launch multiple attacks, forcing the Serbs to husband their resources--especially heavy weapons--to defend threatened fronts. The Serbs may believe that the fall of the enclaves is inevitable and prefer to let them wither under siege rather than commit scarce resources in immediate attacks against them.
- If the UN withdrawal is accompanied by the threat of a NATO air campaign to deter the Serbs, the BSA may hold off on launching an attack. The Bosnian Serb military leadership may calculate that by delaying they can allow international interest to wane or allow the Serbs to point to future Bosnian Government offensives as a justification for attacks.
- Serb actions also may be affected by the timing of a UN withdrawal. The Serbs may prefer to wait for winter--as they did in the 1992-1993 attack--to launch their offensive. Winter would hinder the movement of the mostly infantry Bosnian Government forces in the enclaves, although it would also hamper BSA movement. Winter weather would also inhibit NATO airstrikes.
- Over the longer term--six months to a year after the UN pulls out--the Serbs will almost certainly use whatever force is necessary to eliminate the enclaves. The Serbs would need to bring in substantial forces from other fronts to physically capture the enclaves.
- The Serbs will attempt to avoid costly house-to-house fighting to take the enclaves, preferring to rely on their traditional strategy of seizing the high ground around the main towns for artillery positions and bombarding the civilian population to drive them out. If the civilians leave, Bosnian Government forces would probably abandon the enclaves.

Enclaves are Vulnerable

The three eastern enclaves are all extremely vulnerable to a concerted BSA offensive; the forces defending the enclaves have been effectively cut off from substantial Bosnian Government logistics support for at least two years--about a year in the case of Gorazde--and they lack heavy weapons. Government commanders have admitted that if the Bosnian Serbs launched a major attack on the enclaves, they would be unable to save them. On the positive side, the enclaves are in relatively rugged terrain that would hinder a Serb attack and we believe the Bosnian Government has substantial troops in the three enclaves.

- **Srebrenica** is probably the most vulnerable of the three enclaves. The Bosnian Serbs had virtually captured the city before the UN intervened in 1993. The large civilian population--some 40,000, mostly refugees--are defended by four Bosnian Government light infantry units with a total of 3,000 to 4,000 troops. These forces are currently opposed by some 1,800 Bosnian Serbs with three to 10 tanks, and some 20 heavy artillery pieces and mortars.
- **Zepa**, because of high mountains on all four sides, is a natural redoubt that strongly favors the defender. Its relatively small population--an estimated 15,000--is defended by one brigade of about 1,000 to 1,250 troops. The Serbs have an estimated three light infantry battalions in the area, with a total of about 600 troops.
- **Gorazde** would require the largest effort by the Bosnian Serbs to capture. Gorazde officials in the enclave still have some contact with Bosnian Government forces elsewhere, maintain some local arms production, and have a sizable defending force--an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 Government troops are currently holding off some 5,300 Serbs. During the 1994 Serb offensive, however, the BSA more than doubled the number of troops in the area prior to their attack. There are an estimated 65,000 civilians still in the enclave.